



NEWS RELEASE

SPOKANE BRANCH OFFICE

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Hearing Set for Small Business Owners to Comment About Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

SPOKANE – Small business owners with concerns about excessive enforcement of federal rules can voice their complaints at a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing at the SBA Seattle District Office that will be simultaneously videoconferenced to Spokane on Tuesday, July 27th from 8:30 am to noon. Eastern Washington participants can join the videoconferenced hearing at the SBA Spokane Branch Office, 801 West Riverside Avenue, Suite 200 in Spokane. In Seattle, the hearing will be translated into Mandarin Chinese.

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera holds hearings around the country for business owners to discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal regulatory compliance practices. “We work with agencies back in Washington D.C. to encourage a less punitive and more small-business friendly regulatory environment,” Barrera said.

“One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies,” said National Ombudsman Michael Barrera.

“Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations,” he said, “and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage.”

SBA Seattle's Acting District Director, Lyn Hamilton is coordinating the joint Seattle-Spokane videoconferenced hearing on Barrera's behalf and welcomes the chance for small business owners to speak out. “If anyone has been subjected to unfair or excessive regulatory enforcement by a federal agency, we want to hear your story,” Hamilton said.

Barrera's office works closely with more than 35 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints about excessive enforcement of federal regulations. Congress established the Office of the National Ombudsman in 1996 with the passage of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

The act established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country. Carl Grossman, an executive with Public Private Partnerships Inc from Portland, is Chairman of the board in Region X, which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

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Information gathered at these hearings is included in the national ombudsman's annual report to Congress, along with findings and recommendations about the regulatory enforcement environment and its effect on small business. Each federal regulatory agency is rated in the report based upon their responsiveness to small business comments.

The national ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts or securing guaranteed loans.

Anyone interested in testifying at this hearing can contact Coralie Myers, the BIC Manager for the SBA Spokane Branch Office at 509-353-2630. For more information about the national ombudsman and this hearing, visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

To obtain information on SBA's programs and services in the Inland Northwest, call the SBA Spokane Branch Office at 509-353-2800, or visit our Web site at www.sba.gov/wa/spokane.

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